

The Mol-Gobbin

By MARION HILL.
Author of "The Pettison Twins."



"Brenda got a curtain call which brought her out three times."

"Don't ask me what Mol-Gobbin means, or how it is spelled, for I don't know; but I can tell you what, in Studheim's estimation, it emphatically was, it was Brenda Swenson. Perhaps the times when he found her most Mol-Gobbinish were at rehearsal, after he had tried for half an hour or more to make her repeat a miserable three words or so in any tone a shade more tender than the blast of a hungry cat, and had to give it up, despairing of making the faintest thrill of soul in her beautiful body, despairing of invoking a shred of brain to help out the lovelessness of her face, despairing of being able to coerce her, even from managerial heights, into mimicking any experience of which her raw youth was as yet guileless. After wearing out his patience, Studheim would fly into a good American passion and roar:

"Get out of the way, you Mol-Gobbin! Borrow a codfish and study it in its emotional moments and then come back here and act! Get off the earth! You make me weary!"

"My God, and I dry so hard!" burst blubberingly from the lovely Swede, down whose perfect face would be pouring a wet torrent of real tears.

"You'll dry harder than ever now," would be Studheim's heartless comment, the fire in his handsome black eyes quite unquenched by the river of her contrition.

"Yes, I will, I will. Thank you, Mr. Studheim. Shall I begin it over again for you yet?"

"Somebody take the Mol-Gobbin away," he would implore, and out of us would coax the tall young girl into the wings, and there would pat and pet her back into her usual condition of healthy vacuity. During the process she would sob very loudly, cry heartily, blow her nose childishly, and then emerge from the ordeal as fresh as a rain-washed tulip. No amount of grief could ever redden the snow-white purity of her extraordinary skin or dim the beauty of her sky-blue eyes.

Nina Leavitt usually came to the final rescue. Nina was our "juvenile," she was 17 years old, a grandmother, and as dainty and capable a little lady as ever danced and sang through a 15-year-old part.

"Come to my room this afternoon, Brenda, and I'll put it at it again," she would promise.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Nina," responded the northern koddess, with a grievous sniff and sob of reminiscent woe, just like a diverted baby. "And then when night comes, I'll do it right; isn't it?" With this piteous question she would look yearningly at us all. When truth is below par honesty is the worst sort of policy. So we would all exclaim in heart: anorus:

"Sure, Brenda."

It was worth more fibs than one to see the slow sun break over her face. When on the stage, though she was magnificently beautiful as a woman, she was more wooden than wax as an actress. Yet not one of us wasted a thought to wonder why Studheim kept her in his company. Brenda in herself answered that query. There was nothing one-half as lovely on the whole English-speaking stage. Even had she been deaf, dumb and imbecile, she would have been worth twice her salary for the mere picture she made.

Yet, after all, Morris, Studheim's saved over her, less for the sake of her present worth than from his fervent belief in her potential greatness. By inheritance, perhaps, he was a dealer in futures, and could not help it. The rest of us were not so sanguine; not to the limit, that is; though we one and all acknowledged that if the awakening fire of genius ever touched her by even so much as a stray spark she'd make her own fortune and her manager's in less than no time.

But we doubted the contingency. Brenda was the willing victim of a dope-like contentment. Brenda does not begin to express it, for the reason that bovines ruminate, and Brenda did not. She was absolutely unimpaired, and therefore enjoyed a placidity greater than a cow's. She had never "gone" on the stage—there was no go to her—she had been put there; and

there she doubtless stay till some one removed her, his, and or undertaker. She had no wants, consequently no incentives; she had no ambition, and could not be spurred; no vanity, and could not be coaxed. She had good nature, good health, good appetite and a perfectly flawless beauty of face and figure. Why, indeed, should she crave more? Perhaps we were the fools, not she. All she lacked intellect, she possessed memory—the best substitute for intellect. Without memory her accent and idiom, her vulgarisms would have broken through into some of her brief speeches on the stage, and then even her beauty could not have saved her from ridicule; but, as it was, her unexposed memory enabled her to repeat every word just as it had been drilled into her with an undeviating correctness and monotony of a phonograph.

Yet once Studheim leaned too heavily upon the prop of Brenda's stolid memory, and his fall was bad. All this time we were playing summer stock in Schenectady, where Studheim had leased a theatre and engaged his own company for the express purpose of being able to play his best pieces on the stage, and then even her beauty could not have saved her from ridicule; but, as it was, her unexposed memory enabled her to repeat every word just as it had been drilled into her with an undeviating correctness and monotony of a phonograph.

Just now he was poetically in thrall to Miss Nance Delancey, who played his leads; this kept him up to his act in standard; but it also kept him away from his own company. He was doing Macbeth that week, "doing him good and plenty," Nina said; and at the last moment Studheim recalled the fact that he was short on "apparitions" for the caldron scene. Previously, on the road, little Jane Duke had done them all, one after the other, shooting up through the trap and letting off her snarl speeches as nonchalantly as a chiling. You couldn't scare Jane Duke. That is one reason, though, why Morris let her go. He liked a reasonable bit of awe from his troupe; and the rest of us, we fed it to him, but now lacked Jane and had no "apparitions." So Brenda, with a splash of gore on her brow, was given the task of appearing in the witch-fire. Studheim hated to trust her with a luckless combination like "The Thane of Eife," but had to—therefore drilled her and gave her intonations, even on the word "beware."

"Like this," he hissed to the stolid Venus, trying to magnetize her with his magnificent eyes. "Macbeth, beware! beware! beware!"

"All right," whispered Brenda stoically. The performance was under way, and they dared not be too vocal. She glanced out to the stage in order to her locations. "I say 'be where' and where is it you will be, Mr. Studheim?"

"Right in front of you. (You cold-storage swab—) And it's beware. It means look out, look out, look out—(and God help us all if we don't!)"

"Oh, I thank you, Mr. Studheim, for your explaining kindness," murmured Brenda.

He shot her an alert look, to detect possible sarcasm, but of course saw none, because there was none. With a tragic supplication to the helpful powers above, Morris went to his doom.

For the wabbly passage up the tray, the glare of fire, the bloodshot agony in the eyes of the tortured Thane, all proved unsettling to the "second apparition."

"Ach, look out, Macbeth; look out, two times, and look out some more yet."

Strange to say, not a word jarred on the audience. They really did not get much of it, for Macbeth raved with a most quick and saving sanity, the witches incanted unduly but with com-

mendable discretion, and we rattled a thing or two in the wings. Then we sank upon props and laughed in whispers till we ached.

Brenda took her scoring from Studheim with lovely, bland equanimity in spite of the fact that two torrents of easy tears poured down her face. But they dried as soon as his back was turned.

"If look out, I'll beware, it makes small matter which," she explained with one of her soft, wide, radiant smiles. She had the smile of a boy baby—a sudden, cheerful widening of the mouth, with no more coquetry in it than there is in a canned clam.

We none of us ever got far in our love-making with Brenda. We all of us tried it, one after another, several times over, especially while traveling—one gets very tired on a train—and Brenda would help us along to the best of her ability, even taking pins ostentatiously out of her belts if our arms wandered around that way, but she did it with such a hearty motherliness that we became comfortably discouraged. We were all her big brothers, and she plainly thought the world of us, singly or bunched. So we mostly bunched and gave it up.

Not even Morris Studheim's facile credulity was strong enough to tempt him into making siege of her heart. Even though one of his axioms was that no woman could possibly become an acceptable actress until she had had an emotional past. When he was engaging a leading woman, it was no past, no contrast. He did not go so far as to insist that these pasts should be regrettable, but they generally were, so there you are. He also contended that no actor could thrill his public unless he were at the moment a martyr to an unrequited episode of the soul.

Just now he was poetically in thrall to Miss Nance Delancey, who played his leads; this kept him up to his act in standard; but it also kept him away from his own company. He was doing Macbeth that week, "doing him good and plenty," Nina said; and at the last moment Studheim recalled the fact that he was short on "apparitions" for the caldron scene. Previously, on the road, little Jane Duke had done them all, one after the other, shooting up through the trap and letting off her snarl speeches as nonchalantly as a chiling. You couldn't scare Jane Duke. That is one reason, though, why Morris let her go. He liked a reasonable bit of awe from his troupe; and the rest of us, we fed it to him, but now lacked Jane and had no "apparitions." So Brenda, with a splash of gore on her brow, was given the task of appearing in the witch-fire. Studheim hated to trust her with a luckless combination like "The Thane of Eife," but had to—therefore drilled her and gave her intonations, even on the word "beware."

Brenda's beauty extended to her voice, which was sweet and penetrating, throaty but simple reed instrument. It was pure melody, yet was without those harmonic undercurrents of humors which give some voices a terrible power to grip the heart of another, who hears. Some day, doubtless, Brenda's voice would take hold—then!—well, the blankly sweet present for the sake of a magnificent possibility—and hoped we might be there to see and hear.

In furtherance of this ultimate belief in her, Studheim expended not only pains, but money. He engaged special teachers for Brenda and had her taught fencing, singing, elocution, and, incidentally, English; and in return she obediently fenced, sang, elocuted and improved in English, all with the joyless precision of an admirable bit of mechanism. To pay for this, Studheim weekly parted with a roll of bills big enough to choke a horse.

"She'll make good yet," he would persist, and the education will have to come first; it's always too late afterward. When they make a hit they leave off studying."

That poor bank account of his! Our summer stock had been a humbug, terribly. Business was fair, but did it pay expenses, owing for one thing to Studheim's penchant for good scenery and costumes. Then, too, over in Troy there was a rival theatre whose manager kept Studheim awfully hot. This manager, Simeon Kelly by name, flattened many a one of Studheim's productions by bringing it out at his own theatre a week or so ahead of us. Just for the jaunt a lot of our townfolk who otherwise would have been our patrons used to go over to Troy on the trolley to see Kelly's theatre for a change. Come summer and a fine night, people think nothing of going for an ice cream soda by way of the moon and back.

Then, in a fit of boredom, Kelly closed his theatre and dismissed his company. Next he began to pine for excitement, and wished he had not.

Finally, he became enamored of Brenda—at a distance, of course—and made overtures to have us finish the season in Troy with him. This would have suited Studheim excellently. He invited Kelly to a midnight supper on the stage, to talk things over.

"I'll come," said Sim Kelly; then, casually, "you may seat me next to the girl with the hair."

With some men, it is eyes; with some, voice; and with others, hair. Well, Brenda had a cataract of it. Had she had to match—but she had not, and no wonder Studheim tried to press a point or two upon her. He kept away from it till the curtain had rung down on the last act and the supper was imminent. In evening gown and her hair bagged out until the whole company would have gone on a straw ride in it, Brenda was certainly a dream of a beauty. And she was quite ready for the supper, too, for she was always hungry. She had the ghastly good appetite, not of a glutton, but of a healthy, growing girl of unimpeded heart action.

Morris Studheim took her tenderly and imploringly by her two hands. "Brenda, my darling," he said—the endearment was his usual style when he was made up for a complimentary supper and meant nothing more specific—"Brenda, you can help me a great deal tonight, if you will."

"So?" asked Brenda, solemnly impressed. Let any one who considers her monovisible a vulgar one hear Brenda and change his mind. The word slipped from her in really flute-like sweetness.

"Yes, angel; this whole supper revolves around you. Sim is coming for the sole purpose of being seated beside you."

"My God, what next?" she said, with phlegmatic resignation.

"Haps next, star of my life," he said patiently, "and if you want anything but a Scandinavian mooncalf with a frost on you would not oblige me to go into detail. Briefly, I want you to be nice to him."

"Sure?" was her hearty assent; then, docilely, "but how, what?"

"Oh, he'll drink your health," rather roared Studheim, "and you must like it."

"All right; I like it," stolidly agreed Brenda.

"And when he says sweet things to you, say sweet things back; if you can't, why, cut off a smile and hand it out to him."

"I'll cut off a smile," she chose, immovably.

"Perhaps he'll want to hold your hand a little," said Studheim, becoming interested in his lines.

Brenda here looked at him and said: "Then do I soak him one?" she asked thoughtfully.

"Not on your life," begged Studheim. "That's just the point."

Brenda broke into an irresistibly delicious smile as light glimmered on her cloudy horizon.

"I see," she said. "It is business that he holds my hands just as you do now."

"Yes," said Studheim, dropping them. "Make Sim think he's the ham in the sandwich."

The mention of sandwich brought so fast a look into her face that Studheim considerably lost the way to the supper table. A closed scene shut out the draughts and conserved the lights, so that we were both brilliant and comfortable, while a score of willing stage hands sped around on rubber-tired roller skates, metaphorically, to keep us in supply. Morris was at the end, Sim at the other, with Nance Delancey and Brenda at place of honor on either hand. Anybody but a Mol-Gobbin would have been slightly conscious of distinction, but with Brenda, the nearer the loaf the worthier the seat, and she merely ate with methodical placidity. Herodically obedient to instruction, however, she from time to time let loose a smile upon her admirer, immediately returning to her plate, though the while he swam in his rapture. The rest of the lesser beings, with Nina in our midst to keep us from dying of neglect, were spread at the board between the star performers in the comedy and got more out of the meal than the food.

The conversation, general at first, was wittily funny, but eventually, so confining ourselves mostly to professional experiences, to apt distortions of lines from plays and good-timed rallery of players. Later Nance and Morris withdrew their voices from the babel, and took a kind of love route of their own, conversing in a hushed, emotional style—up upon a mesa-land of clouds and moonshine, coming to deep places and taking their trestles with commendable celerity, swooping down into canyons of intimate comprehension, then up again on the rim of things—very entertaining, what we got of it, but strictly private, or should have been. Sim Kelly tried very hard to follow their lead with his own divinity, and was growing pallid with non-success.

Not that he was discouraged. He, as did his audiences, conceived Brenda capable of just as much emotion as he desired of her. To the thoughtful she was full of thought; the lover she was full of love; to the reserved she optimized reserve; to the spiritual she radiated spirit; while, for a fact, she was merely healthily empty. "And you are trying to be cruel to me?" mourned Kelly finally.

"No, no!" cried Brenda, thrilled into responsiveness. Cruel? Certainly not with her salary depending otherwise. Under the circumstances he drew closer and gazed with good, honest adoration at the changeless marvel of her face.

"I wonder if you know how beautiful you are," he said.

"My God, I hope so," said Brenda faintly, not wishing to be lacking at any required point.

This doubled him up. He took it for his triumph, and Brenda, in a beam of approval and incitement, so Brenda felt that she had earned another sandwich, and took it.

Sim Kelly began to whisper very beautiful things into her ear, and because his nearness was distasteful to her, she cast a glance of annoyed inquiry at her manager. Under gesture of safety, Morris invited her to stand at a white longer, he remembered his gastronomic smile, and put it into action. Taking her sandwich from her mouth, she said to him briefly:

"You are the ham."

This Kelly flashed to Brenda, who understood, there was not one of us who blamed him, or who would have acted a shade differently under the provocation of that soft young cheek of velvet and cream. Now we blame his reception of it. Had she done less than she did she would have been less of a whole-souled, affectionate creature than she was. Unhastily putting down a white longer of sandwich, she remembered her big beautiful palm, she slapped Mr. Kelly with a magnificent resonance.

"And if you do that once more yet, I'll sock you another already," she said evenly in her voice of music.

In the middle of broken speech, the rest of us sat stiff with apprehension. But Kelly, who was a big man, fat and fair in more ways than one, solved the

No samples,
no ex-
changes,
no approvals
on dress
goods.

Walker's

CORNER 3rd SO. AND MAIN

Phones: Independent—227; Bell—EXC
Call all departments.

Positively
no credits
will be
made on
returned
goods.

We are hammering dress goods hard

Must do it—only seven weeks before inventory—stocks must come down.

Monday morning again our entire stock of dress fabrics including black goods, cream goods and fancy goods reduced—reductions are 20 per cent—33 1-3 per cent—40 per cent and 50 per cent.

Entire stock of black dress goods—complete assortment of weaves for this season—representing the leading and most reliable makers, such as Priestley's, and others of equal importance—to go at a reduction of ... **20 per cent**

Entire stock of this season's exclusive monotone fancies—most beautiful stripes, designs and colorings To go at a reduction of ... **33 1-3 per cent**

Entire stock of exclusive pattern suits in two color effects—Exclusively new—To go at a reduction of **40 per cent**

Entire stock of colored dress goods—complete in assortment of up-to-date weaves and colors—all 1908 materials—to go at a reduction of ... **20 per cent**

Entire stock of cream dress goods—including every up-to-date cream weave—to go at a reduction of ... **20 per cent**

Entire stock of exclusive pattern suits, in solid color effects—a Wide Wales and Van Dyke styles—A remarkable line of dress goods to offer at a reduction of ... **25 per cent**

GAS ARC LAMPS



Are ideal for store, office, shop and factory lighting. They give a brilliant white light, well diffused, and the operating cost is only

2½c PER HOUR

Stop a minute and think what that means. You are not only getting a better quality of light, a more reliable light, but getting it at nearly half the cost of any other light. Think it over; the holiday season is coming, and a brilliantly lighted store is going to mean a great deal to you. Ask us to submit your estimates now.

UTAH GAS & COKE CO.

61-65 Main St.

'Phones 4321.



"Queen Quality" for the price. It is only possible when behind it you have the largest factory of women's shoes in the world.

Vincent Shoe Co.

\$1.00 a Week All You Need. It is a Pleasure to Us to Extend Credit to Everybody

Because we can safely guarantee every article we sell. You can dress the entire family at our store for \$1.00 a week.

The Mercantile Installment Co.

74 W. 2d So.

Continued on Page 7.